

5th November 1968

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Dear John

As you know the Board have had several informal discussions here about the optimum size of our sort of laboratory. Although we have only our impressions to go on, we doubt whether it would be wise to expand this laboratory much beyond the size it will be in, say, October 1969, mainly because we feel that personal interaction goes down if a laboratory is more than a certain size and because, if it didn't go down, the greatly increased amount of interaction would probably be too distracting.

For this reason we have not been enthusiastic about making this into an EMBO laboratory, or having a large EMBO laboratory on the same site. However, these arguments would not apply to anything like the same extent if we were next to a large laboratory (or set of laboratories) with which we interacted "weakly" - that is, in a way which would only take up a small fraction of our time, and with which we would not feel compelled to associate closely.

All this preamble is to introduce a suggestion which occurred to me when I recently visited the Weizmann Institute at Rehovot, when they told me that they had started up nearby an "Industrial Research Park". Individual firms were encouraged to rent space in special buildings, in the hope that they would get advice on some of their problems from people working in the Weizmann. This has proved profitable to the Weizmann and useful to the firms. In the case of Cambridge it might be sensible to limit it to research rather than to manufacture.

It seems to me that this sort of scheme is worth serious consideration by the MRC and other Government Agencies. It is often complained that there is too little interaction in this country between Industry and people doing pure research. An excellent way to promote this is physical proximity. Max feels that there are probably several opportunities on the model-building and x-ray equipment side, and it seems highly likely that in the future various pharmaceutical and chemical firms will become interested either in our results or our techniques. The same must surely be true for other large MRC labs, like the one at Mill Hill. In these matters a little timely advice can go a long way.

At this stage I do not wish to do more than raise the possibility with you in a preliminary way. Clearly, a fairly detailed study would have to be

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made on the experience in other countries. (I am told there are several Industrial Parks in the USA - at MIT for example) and an assessment as to the conditions (geographical, etc.) where such an association might be expected to work well. It would in any case be sensible in the first instance to try it out on a limited scale. I hope you will not think me irresponsible when I say that I hope that this exploratory work can be done by others!

While I am on the topic, may I suggest that the attitude of the MRC (and no doubt the ARC, etc.) to consulting needs to be reconsidered. I recently enquired about this and found that although the MRC does not forbid it, it certainly does not encourage it. Naturally there have to be restrictions on consulting. In particular, the MRC itself must not appear to support a particular individual firm. However, I do not see why we should not be allowed to do up to, say, 10 days' paid consulting a year, one's salary being reduced by an amount equivalent to the time spent. Personally, I am not myself very keen to do much of this sort of thing, but it seems to me that if people wish to do it (no doubt partly to augment their income) it is in the national interest that they should be encouraged to do so. Moreover, it is generally felt that a little consulting, like a little teaching, can have a vitalising effect on one's own work. The reason against it given to me verbally by one council employee - that one would be favouring one firm at the expense of another - seemed to me to have a rather old-fashioned nineteenth century ring about it.

If you are at all interested in Industrial Research Parks I could, of course, make further enquiries myself. A first step would perhaps be to write to the head of the Weizmann and ask him to give us the benefit of his experience of the scheme there. But no doubt such an approach would come better from you than from me.

Yours sincerely

F.H.C. Crick